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Editorial

There is a new method of studying history that is very popular in the West. It is called "the hobby-version of history". What you do is take something you are interested in, be it swords, disease-bearing parasites or time-pieces, and then start seeing the whole of human history in terms of that particular thing. McNeill, a historian from Chicago, U.S.A. did it ten years ago with a history of civilization written entirely in terms of disease. Now a Harvard Scholar, David S. Landes, has done the same thing with clocks. To him, clocks do more than tell the time; they were the key to the development of the modern civilization. His book is aptly entitled "*Revolution in Time: Clocks and the Making of the Modern World*"

Muslim scholars have, in recent times, applied the same method to their study of the Quran. Some are especially interested in politics; they see the whole of the Quran as a sort of political treatise, telling man how a political system which corresponds to the will of God can be established on earth. Some see law and jurisprudence as the all-important factor in human life; to them every verse of the Quran bears legal implications. Some see the Quran as a book of science, and some as a book of sociology. Each one sees the teachings of the Quran in a particular light, depending on his own interest.

History is the study of man's life on earth. If one looks at history objectively, taking into account all the factors concerned, one will find that it has much to say on how to be successful in this world. The Quran is a study of man's eternal life. It shows him how to act on earth for success in the next life. One cannot learn from history if it is seen in the light of one particular theme, because so many other factors which have contributed to the development of human civilization will then simply be passed over. likewise the true message of the Quran cannot be understood if it is viewed from the subjective angle of one's own special interest: the fact that the Quran is essentially a book of divine guidance, showing us the way to eternal salvation will simply not register; one will fail to realize that its message is such that it must permeate to the depths of one's immortal soul, in order to be manifested in all one's thoughts, words and deeds.

The Message of the Qur'an

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Chapter 2,

They are like those who kindled a fire, but as soon as it lit up all around them God took away their light leaving them in darkness, where they could not see. Deaf, dumb and blind, they shall never return to the right path. Or like those who, beneath a dark storm-cloud charged with thunder and lightening, thrust their fingers in their ears at the sound of every thunder-clap for fear of death (God thus encompasses the deniers). The lightening almost takes away their sight: whenever it flashes upon them they walk on, 'but, as soon as it darkens, they stand still. Indeed, if God pleased, He could take away their sight and hearing: He has power over all things. VV 17-20

In a dark room black and white will appear the same, but as soon as the lights are turned on, black appears as black, and white as white. So it is with the message of God revealed unto the Prophets. The divine scriptures are God's lights to the world. When this light is revealed, guidance and error clearly appear for what they are. It becomes evident what good and evil deeds consist of, and what their consequences are. But some people, instead of being subservient to the truth, want the truth to be subservient to them. The light of God only serves to confuse them. Their hidden jealousy and pride take hold of them. As soon as they see themselves in the divine mirror, their negative sentiments are aroused. The prejudices within them overcome their senses. They have eyes but cannot see; they have ears but cannot hear; they have tongues but cannot speak. They can neither hear the call of truth, nor respond to it in any way, nor by any sign from God can they find their way. Instead of reflecting upon the call of truth, as they should do, they evade it either by attaching no importance to it, or by not listening to it at all.

Fear is another factor which prevents them from acknowledging the truth. Rain is a wonderful blessing of God. But with rain comes thunder and lightening which terrifies nervous people. So it is with God's word revealed unto His prophets. On the one hand it holds promise of great success to man, but on the other there are temporary risks involved: there is the fear of losing one's worldly positions; the dilemma of clashing with the conventional set-up; the necessity to face up to reality as far as one's fate in the next life is concerned, rather than on wishful thinking. Fear of these things sometimes makes one halt, and sometimes makes one move hesitantly on. But such caution cannot help one. Those who do not respond to God's call openheartedly are simply inviting severer punishment from God.

Mankind, serve your Lord, who has created you and those who have gone before you, so that you may guard yourselves against evil; who has made the earth a bed for you and the sky a dome, and has sent

down water from the sky to bring forth fruits for your sustenance. And do not knowingly set up rivals to God. If you doubt what We have revealed to Our servant, produce one chapter comparable to this Book. Call upon your helpers besides God to assist you, if what you say is true. But if you fail (as you are sure to fail) then guard yourselves against the fire whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the unbelievers. Proclaim good tidings to those who have faith and do good works. They shall dwell in gardens underneath which rivers flow: whenever they are given fruit to eat they will say: 'This is what we were given before,' for they shall be given the like. Therein they will have pure spouses, and shall abide there forever. VV 21-25

God alone has created man and all that is in the heavens and on earth. He has invested the world with profound significance and is always watching over it. The proper course for man is to take God as his Creator, Master and Sustainer, and not attempt to set up with Him as a partner; that is, he should give himself up entirely to God. But since He is invisible, it often happens that man gives importance to some visible object and worships it instead of God. He equates creation with the Creator. Partially or totally, at times calling it by the name of God and at times not.

Therein lies man's basic error. The prophets taught man to glorify God alone, and forsake the other things that he had elevated to positions of glory. People whose hearts are attached to others besides God consider the call of true religion repugnant. They have become so attached to their false gods that they cannot believe that they are unreal. They cannot believe that the truth is what is being proclaimed by a mortal like themselves.

God's revealed word is indisputably marked with a divine radiance. Its style cannot be imitated; its reasoning cannot be refuted. This goes to show that this is the word of God. Those who deny it, irrespective of this, will find no other abode in God's, universe, but Hell. Those who find, God in the word of God are already glimpsing the next world. They are the ones who will be admitted into the gardens of Eden.

God does not hesitate to give us parables about gnats or even smaller creatures. Those who believe know that it is the truth from their Lord, but those who disbelieve ask: 'What could God mean by this parable?' By it God misleads many and enlightens many. But He misleads none except the evil-doers, who break His covenant after accepting it, and sever what He has bidden to be joined and make mischief in the land. These are the losers. How can you deny God? Did he not give you life when you were dead, and will He not cause you to die and then restore you to life? Will you not return to Him at last He created for you all that the earth contains; then, turning to the sky, fashioned it into seven heavens. He has knowledge of all things. VV 26-29

Man's first duty to God is that, true to the promise made between the Creator and His creatures at the beginning of the world, he should remain God's servant. Then, he should live among his fellows consolidating all the ties that God wishes. Thirdly, when God appoints any mortal to preach His word, he should not turn others away from his preaching by inventing groundless arguments against it. The

message of truth seeks to harmonize man with his own nature: those who prevent others from receiving it are guilty of making mischief in the land.

God has created man from nothing. This is a favour great enough to make man humble himself before God. But God has not just created man and left him to his own devices: He has given him an earth made in perfect accord with him. And that is not all. There is much more to the matter: man is constantly living under peril of death: suddenly, he will be brought before the lord of the universe to be judged. This should make devote himself entirely to God; it should make him remember and obey God throughout his life; it should make him remain God's humble servant.

When the divine message is so clear and reasonable, why do people not accept it? Deliberate fault-finding is the chief cause of this. One who is not willing to learn from something does not think seriously about it. When some argument is presented to him, he looks at it superficially and sets about finding some flaw in it. In this way he makes the message seem irrational, for if it were the true word of God, how could it include such trivial matters? But those who are willing to learn are able to give the matter serious thought. They do not take long to realize that it is the truth. It does not make any difference to them that the truth has been explained in parables of mere gnats, and such-like insignificant creatures.

Fate of the Truth-Teller

This is a true story which appeared in an American magazine. One Greenland Eskimo was taken on one of the American North Polar expeditions. Later, as a reward for faithful service, he was brought to New York for a short visit. He was filled with amazement and wonder at the miracles of sight and sound that he saw there. When he returned to his native village, he told stories of buildings that rose to the very face of the sky; of tram cars, which he described as houses that moved along a track; of artificial lights, and all the other dazzling concomitants of the metropolis.

His people looked at him coldly and walked away, and forthwith throughout the village he was dubbed 'Sagdluk', meaning the Liar. In shame, he carried this name to his grave. Long before his death his original name was entirely forgotten. The simple minds of the Eskimos were unable to visualize the startling pictures drawn by 'Sagdluk', so they simply rejected the truth.

Just as the Eskimo was made to see a hitherto unknown world, so God gave the prophets a glimpse of the world that lies beyond death. They came to their peoples and conveyed to them the truths that God had embedded in their consciousness. But since these truths belonged to an unseen world, which man was unable to visualize, people dubbed them madmen and liars (Quran, 11:27). This was the fate of all the prophets of God. (Quran, 36:30)

Indeed, every truth-teller in the history of man has had to tread the same rocky path. In this world a veil of falsehood clouds the truth. Man has not seen the world in which truth will come into its own. The prophets were made to see that world before its coming, so that they could warn man of its advent. But they met with disbelief from people who had seen nothing beyond the world which meets the eye.

Everything Created In Pairs

**Nothing is complete without its pair.
So this world must also have a pair.**

Many of the basic teachings of the Quran can be well understood in the light of modern knowledge. The Quran says, for example, that this world is not the final one; after it will come another world. At present, that world is invisible to us, but it is present nonetheless; it exists in real and absolute form. Early theologians resorted to speculation in support of this claim. But the proof that the Qur'an has given is one that can be better understood when put to the test of scientific investigation.

The Quran says:

And all things We made in pairs, so that you may give thought.

(51: 49)

Everything is in accordance with this law of nature. Nothing is complete without its pair. So this world must also have a pair, for only then will it be complete. It is this pair of the present world that is called the hereafter.

It was known in ancient times that there were pairs in the human and animal worlds. Later on man learnt of pairs in trees and plants. In 1928, however, it was discovered that solid matter also had a pair. In that year the British physicist Paul Dirac demonstrated the possibility of other, invisible particles existing alongside those of matter. Then, in 1932, K. Anderson discovered, while studying cosmic rays, that with electrons there were other particles with an opposite electric charge. These particles were called anti-electrons. *This* research was pursued further and finally it was learnt that all particles in the universe existed in the form of pair-particles: particle and anti-particle, atom and anti-atom, matter and anti-matter; there was even, as Dirac showed in 1933, an anti-world.

Many present-day scientists are of the opinion that this anti-world is an entity apart from us, having a parallel existence of its own. This world is made up of matter; according to the law of opposites there should be another world made up of anti-matter. It is estimated that 20 million years ago, when the Big Bang explosion occurred, photon-matter and anti-matter came together in two separate forms. The two then started to form the world and the anti-world.

The first people to work on this theory were a Swedish pair, physicist Oskar Klein and astrophysicist Hannes Alven. The results of their research were published in 1963. The Soviet mathematician, Dr. Gustav Naan, further consolidated the theory. According to him, the anti-world cannot be fully explained by known theories and laws of physics, yet he is convinced that the anti-world exists, even

now. It is, however, independent of us, existing on its own, parallel to this world. In the present world all anti-particles are in an unstable condition; but in the anti-world they will all be stable, for the nuclei of atoms have a negative electric charge, while electrons are positively charge.

Since this world is ephemeral, it follows that the anti-world, or to use its religious term, the hereafter, must be an eternal world. The discoveries of modern science, then, have given us a picture of the next world which accords with that of the Quran.

Fulfilling a Muslim's need – a great act of worship

The Prophet's cousin, Abdullah Ibn Abbas, was in retreat in the Prophet's mosque in Medina, when a person came to him greeted him and sat down. "You seem to be upset about something," Ibn Abbas said to him. "Yes, cousin of the Prophet. I owe someone a debt and, by the Prophet's honour, I am unable to pay it." "Can I speak to this person on your behalf," Ibn Abbas asked him. "Certainly, if you so wish," the man replied. Abdullah Ibn Abbas put on his shoes and set out. "Perhaps you have forgotten that you are in retreat," the man said to him. "No. I have not forgotten, but I remember the Prophet saying," and tears came into Ibn Abbas' eyes as he recalled the Prophet's words. "that it is better for one to leave a mosque where one is in retreat to do a favour to one's fellow-man, and help him in whatever way one can, than to stay in retreat for ten years."

Man's True Purpose in Life

Man attains his highest distinction only when he leads a purposeful life. Such a life characterizes the most advanced stage of human development. This does not mean that by taking up just any task which is apparently significant man's life becomes truly purposeful. A really purposeful life is one in which man discovers his supreme status; a life in which his personality makes manifest its unique distinctive quality. An animal strives to obtain food; a bird flies in search of a better country when the seasons change; a wasp busies itself building up its own home from tiny particles of earth; a herd of deer takes measures to protect itself from wild beasts of prey. All of these appear to be purposeful actions. But when the phrase 'a purposeful life' is applied to man, then it does not refer to efforts of this nature. Without doubt arranging for one's food, clothes and habitation are sure of the tasks that man has to perform in this world; but this is a level of purposefulness in which men and animals, being concerned only with bare survival, are equal. Its true application in relation to man can only be one in which he appears in all his dignity. Man's life becomes purposeful only when it goes beyond common animalism and takes the form of superior humanism.

God's creations in this world fall into two categories: animate and inanimate. Obviously, animate objects enjoy a certain superiority over inanimate objects. The former can be divided into three classes: the vegetable, the animal and the human. Modern scientific research has shown that plants also possess life, in that they nourish themselves, they grow and they have feelings.

But animals and men surely represent a higher form of life. In what way does man excel animals? Many theories have been advanced in answer to this question over the ages, and great minds are still studying it. But modern biologists have come to the conclusion that it is man's capacity for conceptual thought which distinguishes him from other life-forms. Animals lack this quality, whereas man is conscious of the fact that he is thinking. He consciously forms a plan of action in his mind; in his everyday life his actions are determined by himself. Whereas this is not the case with animals. Though many of their actions appear to be like those of men, they are not the result of thought; they all stem from pure instinct. Animals are simply led intuitively by their desires and their needs in certain direction. Their actions are governed by environmental stresses from without and physical pressures from within.

It is in this unique conceptual quality of man that we can conceive of what his higher purpose in life should be. The latter can only be one which does not result from the pressures of desire or of immediate exigencies. It must emanate from his own urge to worship God.

Man's true purpose in life can only be one which reflects the higher side of his personality; one which displays him as the superior being he is.

If one pauses at this stage to take note of what the Quran has to say, one will find that it gives us clear guidance in this matter. Man's purpose in life has been explained in the Quran in the following words:

I created mankind and the Jinn that they might worship me. I demand no livelihood of them, nor do I ask that they should feed me. God alone is the Munificent Giver, the Mighty One, the Invincible.

Zariat V 53

These verses specify man's purpose in life as worship. This is a purpose which elicits from man his uniqueness in its ultimate form. It raises man to a much higher plane than that of animals. Not a trace of animalism contributes to the achievement of such a goal. God does not demand of you a livelihood, the verse states; rather He himself is responsible of your livelihood. This means that worship of God is a purpose which is motivated neither by inward desires nor outward influences. Rather it comes into being through thought alone. Only when a person goes beyond his self and his environment can he understand that there is a higher purpose on which he should focus his life.

The motive force towards the fulfillment of this purpose is not the urge to satisfy one's needs or those of others. The worshipper seeks neither to gratify his own desires nor those of the Being he worships. It is a purpose which sets before man a goal far above all these things – a goal which does not follow internal needs or external pressures, but results purely from conceptual thought.

When a person works, makes money, builds a house, makes an effort to improve his standard of living, he appears to be engaged in efforts towards some worthy end. But a life of this nature cannot be called a purposeful life, for these activities do not demonstrate man's unique status. It might seem as if they are the result of deliberation, but if one looks at the matter in depth, one will see that in actual fact the motive force behind these actions is the same urge that motivates an animal in various ways, its concern for its own survival. It is the driving force of one's desires; the pressure of one's needs, and the wish to fulfill the demands of one's self that underlie such a life. These are the considerations which in fact, guide a person in his search for his livelihood.

When man grows up, he realizes that there are certain material necessities without which he cannot live. He requires food, clothes, a place to live; he requires a reliable source of income to sustain him throughout his life. He is forced by these considerations to obtain these things. Then he sees that those who have an abundance of these material things enjoy respect and apparently possess every form of happiness and luxury in this world. Thus he is driven on to do more than just seek a livelihood; he desires to earn to a degree greatly in excess of his actual requirements.

In bustling markets, grandiose offices, and opulent buildings, he is not really guided by deliberate thought. Rather, he is being guided by inflated ideas of his own needs, desires, longings and ambitions to achieve fame and high status in this world. For this reason these activities cannot be considered as being directed towards the purpose which sets man apart from the animal and lends him a higher distinction.

Man's greater dignity can be based only on a purpose which emanates from inner desires and pressures of environment. Man's true purpose in life can only be to seek the pleasure of God. When man seeks the pleasure of his lord, his human qualities find full manifestation. This is a purpose loftier than the one towards which an animal directs its energies. It distinguishes man from animals. It is the ultimate station of human dignity.

To determine the purpose of life is, in short, the effort to make life meaningful. It must surely, therefore, be one which is in accordance with man's unique status; it must be one which leads man on the path to success and progress in terms of his true nature.

Splitting Hairs

It was pre-partition India. A murder case, which was very clearly against the defendant, had come up in a court of law, the counsel representing the defendant being Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

As the proceedings continued, it seemed more and more inevitable that the murderer would receive his due punishment. Mr. Jinnah, however, was supremely confident. It seemed as if he was taking no interest in the court proceedings, so much so that the defendant and his supporters began to doubt the counsel's intentions. It appeared to them that something had taken Mr. Jinnah's mind off the case, and he was going to let their man hang. Mr. Jinnah, for his part, kept on reassuring them that everything would be all right.

Finally the culprit was sentenced to death. Still Mr. Jinnah did not lose his confidence. The hour and date of execution were fixed. Mr. Jinnah remained unperturbed, right up to the time that his client was due to be hanged.

When the death hour came, Mr. Jinnah went to the hanging room in his barrister's gown. Quietly, he watched the proceedings. When the final moment came and the hangman put the noose around the culprit's neck, Mr. Jinnah sprang to his feet: "Stop!" he commanded the hangman. "If you do anything further, I will see to it that you are hanged!"

Everyone was flabbergasted, "The words in the judgement," Mr. Jinnah said, "are: 'He shall be hanged by the neck'. The noose has been tied round his neck. This action has been carried out now, nothing further can be done."

Following this incident, a law was passed stating that the words of the death-sentence, instead of just: "He shall be hanged by the neck"; should be: "He shall be hanged by the neck until he is dead".

Mr Jinnah can be said to have split hairs about the phrasing of the judgement. Hair-splitting of this nature often comes in useful in this world. It enables one in such cases to get off scot-free; it helps one to regain lost status in life. By splitting hairs, one can always prove oneself in the right, and be able to escape from tight corners. But this is only true of the life of this world. Hair-splitting will be of no use in the hereafter; for in the next world, decisions will be taken on the basis of reality, not on the basis of mere words.

Recognizing the Truth

Shri Ram Ratan Kapila has a refrigerator business in Delhi, and Shri Moti Ram Sarraf is a jeweller in the same city. The two are great friends. They usually go out for a walk together in the morning, and then return home together.

One day the two were walking in an area of Delhi. Shri Ram Ratan Kapila saw something shining in a spot by the side of the road. He thought it was a piece of glass, and, just for the fun of it, picked it up.

After their walk they returned home. Shri Ram Ratan Kapila went to the basin to wash his hands, and thoughtlessly put the object to one side.

Shri Moti Ram Sarraf then went to the same wash basin to wash his hands. He caught sight of the object, and as soon as he saw its glitter, he recognized it as a diamond. He picked it up, washed it, and took it to Shri Ram Ratan Kapila. His friend was astonished to hear that it was a diamond. "I thought it was only a piece of glass," he said. "It's just as well didn't throw it away."

Shri Ram Ratan Kapila was not ignorant of diamonds. He had a diamond necklace at home, which was kept with great care in a special cupboard. But he was not able to recognize a diamond lying in the road.

Both men were familiar with diamonds. The difference was that Shri Moti Ram was a jeweller. He could recognize a diamond wherever it was. But Shri Ram Ratan Kapila only knew the diamond on his own, familiar necklace. He did not know how to recognize a diamond that lay outside the necklace that he was familiar with.

A real jeweller is not just one who recognizes a diamond when it is on his own necklace; a real jeweller is one who recognizes a diamond wherever he sees it. In the same way a lover of truth is one who recognizes truth wherever it is; whether it lies within his own circle, or outside it.

What must be known before one can understand

In 1970 a certain Indian politician went to France. There he met with a French politician who was associated with the ruling Gaullist party. An extract from their conversation appeared in *The Times of India*, July 18, 1983:

"Is there anything in particular you would like to do in Paris?" asked the Gaullist.

"I am a great admirer of de Gaulle," replied the Indian visitor.

"I should like to make a courtesy call on him."

"But he is dead, sir."

What? Nobody told me in India during the briefing."

They must have presumed you were aware of it. He died four years ago."

From this example we can see that everything cannot be spelt out in words; there are some things that one has to know oneself. If one already knows half, then one can be told the rest of the story; but if one does not have half of it in one's mind beforehand, then how can one grasp the whole picture? However reasonable a thing may be, and however well substantiated, if one does not have some prior knowledge of it, it will lie beyond one's comprehension.

If one says to someone, "So-and-so batsman scored a century", he will immediately understand that what is meant by a century is a hundred runs in cricket. But if one says, "A century of hard struggle is needed for the development of a nation", no one will truly understand; for no one can know what it is to devote oneself individually to constructive work for so long a period.

Money assisting in religious and worldly affairs

Umer had some official work done by Abu Ubaida Ibn Jarrah, and afterwards sent him 1000 dinars. Abu Ubaida returned this sum, saying that he had done the work for God's sake, not for Umer's, and would not accept any recompense. Then Umer said to him, "We used to be reluctant to accept the gifts the prophet would give us when he sent us off on some mission. But the prophet told us that we should accept them, for they would help us in our religious and worldly affairs. Hearing this Abu Ubaida agreed to accept the money.

Looking to the future

Man can never be content unless he is provided with a faith which brightens his eternal future; which fills with hope the unknown country that awaits him after death.

Dartington Hall is a prestigious liberal progressive public school, situated near Totnes in Devon, England. Parents pay up to £ 5000 per annum for their children to be educated there. Among Dartington Hall's illustrious parents were the philosopher, Bertrand Russell, and the writer, Aldous Huxley.

But recently the ills of Dartington Hall have come out into the open. Dr. Lyn Blackshaw, who has since resigned as headmaster of the school, wrote a letter to the parents of his 300 pupils, referring to police enquiries into 30 burglaries involving 20 students. He also quoted a warning from one senior officer that, unless a serious problem with sex and drugs could be cleared up, Dartington's senior school would have to close in two years.

On July 11, 1983, Dr. Lyn Blackshaw addressed his staff on the problems facing Dartington Hall. Here is part of what he said:

"The worst thing we can do for our children is destroy their faith in the future, whether it be with apocalyptic visions, the unlikelihood of a job, the uselessness of qualifications. If you really believe that... then how would you behave? ... I believe in many ways we're killing our children's futures by being so damned pessimistic ... If children are persuaded to believe that there's really no future, then the most likely thing they would do is behave in a hedonistic way, live in the present, develop no consistent attitudes. I can tell you, in some ways its sickening coming back to this country." (*Sunday Times*, London, September 4, 1983)

Dr. Lyn Blackshaw is right in saying that the worst thing one can do for any generation is destroy their faith in the future. But the achievement of a livelihood after education is only a small portion of the future. The question of the future extends beyond the present world to the eternal world after death.

Only if man can look hopefully to his eternal future can he be satisfied in life. Man's greatest problem is not the threat of apocalypse, the unlikelihood of a job, the uselessness of qualifications; his greatest problem is that it has become intellectually unfashionable to think of a life after death. It is his faith in his eternal future that is being destroyed. This is the major psychological factor behind his present dissatisfaction, and it is this dissatisfaction that leads to hedonistic and irresponsible behaviour.

Man can never be content unless he is provided with a faith which brightens his eternal future; which fills with hope the unknown country that awaits him after death.

No Clash between Science and Religion

Those who conducted scientific research in the centuries immediately preceding our own were not in any way opposed to religion. When Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) discovered the laws governing the revolution of heavenly bodies, he wrote to a friend: "The continuous rotation of the planets is not only due to the law of gravity; there must also be a divine arm in it. When Darwin (1809-1882) wrote his book, *The Origin of Species*, he expressly acknowledged the existence of God. This is how he concluded the book: "How magnificent is the concept that the Creator first created some simple forms of life, and from them astonishingly simple and wonderful species of life came into existence."

Then why was it that science turned against religion? The real reason behind this was not, as Drapier (1811-1882) and others have realized, any conflict between science and religion; it was, in fact, a conflict between science and ancient theology, which had been founded on Greek and Egyptian philosophy rather than on divine religion. Exponents of religion mistakenly thought of it as a conflict between science and religion; they, therefore, opposed science. The result of *this* was that a contemporary force, which could have been put to the use of religion, became religion's rival from the very outset.

Whose Responsibility

It is the responsibility of Muslims to absorb converts into their society; but Muslim society fails in this responsibility. As a result, converts become like aliens among their new co-religionists.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, a French Christian named Leuen Roche embraced Islam at the hand of the Emir of Algeria, Abdul Qadir Al Jazairi. The Emir took him into his confidence, and appointed him as his special adviser, sending him on various missions. On one journey to the Arabian Peninsula he performed the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Leuen Roche married an Algerian Muslim woman. They lived together for seventeen years. Then French forces entered Algeria. Conflict ensued, and eventually Emir Abdul Qadir was defeated at the hands of the French commander Aldouc Dumal and publicly declared his renunciation of Islam and reconversion to Christianity.

This was a terrible shock for Leuen Roche's Algerian wife. She told him that Islam had now come between the two of them, and that she would not like a serpent like him to stay alive, for people to continually to put her to shame because of him. She took a knife and stabbed Leuen Roche to death. *Al-Thawafat-ul-Arabiya*, Tripolis, December 1982)

Most cases of apostasy of this nature are taken to mean that the person concerned had only accepted Islam hypocritically and, after completing his mission had turned away from the faith. This might be true in a few instances; but it is not correct to apply this theory to all cases of apostasy.

The truth is that, in contemporary time, most people who accept Islam do so on their own, not because of any missionary efforts. Most converts to Islam do not undergo any deep intellectual revolution which makes them change their faith. Usually people who have not previously been strict or fanatical in religious matters accept Islam; they do so on the basis of some temporary and commonplace predilection. If they are lucky enough to find favourable circumstances, they slowly grow stronger in their faith. The superficial impression they initially had of Islam changes into one of greater profundity. But as for those who do not find the circumstances propitious after their conversion to Islam, their faith by degrees becomes weaker. It does not take root in their consciousness. Some of these people spend their lives in a state of weakened faith; others return to their past lives. Just as one reason of no greater significance caused them to accept Islam, another such reason causes them to leave the Islamic fold.

It is the responsibility of Muslims to absorb converts into their society; but Muslim society fails in this responsibility. As a result, converts become like aliens among their new co-religionists. This alienation

sometimes culminates in the extreme form that we call apostasy. It is a fact that apostasy is more often the result of negligence than of plots by enemies of Islam. This negligence is of three main kinds:

1. Missionary work is not conducted in such a way that it can change a person's way of thinking on a profound level. If one accepts Islam for some superficial or casual reason, without undergoing any transformation in consciousness, then one's faith cannot be very long-lasting.
2. When a non-Muslim accepts Islam, he leaves a completely different society behind and enters the fold of Islam. In such circumstances, education is absolutely essential to strengthen his Islamic faith. But Muslims do not possess the ways and means to educate him in Islamic thought. This education is entirely the responsibility of Muslims, but as yet Muslims have not done anything to provide it.
3. Then there is the social problem. When they accept Islam, converts are on the one hand ostracised from their own society, and on the other they are not fully accepted by Muslims society. Such alienation proves unbearable for a social animal like man.

Factors such as these usually create a latent malaise within Muslim converts; they remain in a constant state of frustration and, when confronted with some dilemma, forsake Islam and return to their former ways.

Abdullah Ibn Masud asked the Prophet what action was best. "Praying at the proper time," he replied. "What comes next, Messenger of God?" "Not saying things which hurt others," the Prophet said.

The Islamic Way

It is recorded in the books of *Hadith* and *Seerat* (Prophet's Biography) that the Prophet gave orders for idols to be broken. Iman Ahmad relates this tradition in these words: Ali Ibn Talib recounts that on one occasion the Prophet was present at a funeral at which he asked, "Who among you will go to Medina and leave an idol there without breaking it; a gravestone without leveling it to the ground; an image without destroying it?"

In keeping with these ideas, the prophet is known to have broken idols and statues in Taif, Mecca and other places. However, it must be noted that such measures were taken only in Arabia. It was the will of God that the Arab peninsula should be purified of every last trace of polytheism; that is why this course was followed in Arabia. Moreover, all such measures were undertaken only after the conquest of Mecca; not beforehand.

The principle of destroying idols and statues was not applied to other territories besides the Arab. In other countries Muslims resorted to preaching alone; instead of breaking idols, the Islamic government made arrangements for the conversion of non-Muslims of their own free will, which would automatically result in the eradication of idols.

During the reign of the second Caliph, Umer bin Khattab, many Christian countries were brought under Muslim rule; but no attempts were made to destroy Christian statues. Muslims refrained from entering Churches and houses in which statues were placed. They concentrated their efforts on communicating the message of Islam. In spite of the power that they wielded, they never made any attempts to destroy statues. On one occasion, Umer, the second Caliph, said to some Christians: "We do not enter your Churches because of the presence of images and statues there."

In the fourteenth year of the Islamic era Madain was conquered by Sa'ad Ibn Waqqas. Madain had for long been the capital of the ancient Iranian empire. There was a famous White Palace situated in this city. When the last Iranian monarch, Yazgurd, fled from the palace, on the lips of Sa'ad Ibn Waqqas was a passage from the Surah of the Quran, entitled "Al-Dukhan."

How many gardens, how many fountains, they left behind them. Cornfields, and noble palaces, and good things in which they took delight. Thus it was. And we made other people inherit all that. (44: 25-28)

It was a Friday. The throne of the emperor in the White Palace was replaced by a pulpit. Sa' ad Ibn Waqqas delivered the sermon from the pulpit and the Friday prayer was performed. This was the first Friday prayer to be performed in the ancient Iranian capital.

All the images and statues which were housed in Madain were left as they were. Sa'ad Ibn Waqqas did not break them, neither did he remove them.

History records that when Sa'ad Ibn Waqqas entered the royal palace, he offered prayer in thanks for the victory. He did not pray in congregation. He prayed eight raka't (A section of daily prayer) without a break in between. The palace was converted into a mosque in spite of the presence of the images of people and horses there. Although in the superior position of conquerors, neither Sa'ad Ibn Waqqas nor other Muslims interfered with those images they were left intact. If is a different story today where Muslims even in the position of a minority cannot tolerate.

The companions of the prophet were motivated by a missionary spirit in everything that they did. This spirit made it their prime consideration to communicate the message of Islam to non-Muslims; all other considerations took on secondary importance. They knew that Islam was such a powerful intellectual force that non-Muslims would be unable to resist it. After their submission to Islam, all other aims would be achieved automatically. Thereafter, polytheism, together with all its traces and symbols, would vanish completely.

Meditation and reflection was their worship

Two oxen passed Abu Darda by. Both were carrying a load. One stayed standing; the other sat down. On seeing this, Abu Darda said. "There is a lesson to be learnt from this." Aun Ibn Abdullah Ibn Utbah once asked Abu Darda's wife what Abu Darda's best action was: "Meditation and reflection." she replied. Mohammad Ibn Wasi says that after the death of Abu Zarr, a man came from Basra to meet Abu Zarr's wife to ask her of the manner of her late husband's worship. "He used to sit by himself all day," she answered, "pondering and meditating.

Mohammad Prophet of Revolution

There is a book, published in America, entitled "*The 100*". In it are mentioned one hundred people whom the author believes to have exerted the greatest influence on human history. The author, Dr. Hart, was born into a Christian family, and received a scientific education. But at the top of his roll of honour he has placed neither Christ's name, nor Newton's. There is one person, he believes, whose achievements excel all others: that person is the Prophet Mohammad. No one else has had such an impact on the history of man. "He was the only man in history," he writes, "who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels." (Dr Michael Hart, *The 100*, New York, 1978)

The English historian, Thomas Carlyle, has called the Prophet of Islam "the hero of the Prophets." To the American Michael Hart, he is the outstanding figure of human history. The greatness of the Prophet Mohammad is clear for all to see. This is not just a creed, accepted blindly by his followers; it is an established historical fact. Anyone acquainted with history cannot help but accept it.

If one looks up, one will see the sky encompassing one on all sides. The figure of the Prophet Mohammad encompasses human history in the same way. From whatever angle one looks at history, ever-broadening reverberations of his impact will be manifest. All that is best in human values, all the important advances of human civilization, are direct or indirect results of the revolution he brought about.

Religious institutions had become debased by the veneration of mere mortals; whereas Prophet Mohammad admitted of no other form of religion but that based on the worship of the immortal God. Religious beliefs had very frequently been founded on superstition; but he established them on the foundation of reality. It was he who taught men to conquer nature instead of worshipping it, thus paving the way for the scientific era. Political power had been in the hands of one hereditary monarch; he showed the way to government by the people. Learning had been based on conjecture and assumption; he taught man to learn from observation of reality. Human society had been vitiated by cruelty and oppression; he showed people how to live together in justice and peace. These are all achievements of the prophet of Islam. They cannot in truth be attributed to anyone else beside him. It was he who changed the tide of human history while others have just swum with the tide that he set in motion.

In making the Prophet Mohammad the greatest figure of history, God has bestowed His greatest favour upon mankind. He has made the figure of Mohammad stand out like a tower in human history. One cannot fail to see him, like a mountain on the horizon. He radiates light like a beacon, beckoning all to the true path. Whoever seeks the truth will be drawn towards him. The name of the Prophet Mohammad is one of the most resplendent landmarks in human history, for as a source of guidance he is the greatest. Whoever seeks his guidance will be ineluctably drawn up to the magnificent pinnacle on which he stands.

Mohammad was a prophet like the other prophets who came before him, and his mission was essentially the same as that of the other prophets (Quran, 42:13). But besides being a prophet of God, he had a special role because it had been ordained by God that he should be the last of the prophets.

Mohammad is the father of no man among you. He is the Prophet of God and the last of the prophets. God has knowledge of all things. (Quran, 33: 40)

This world is a place of trial. Here man has been given free will to act as he chooses. The Prophets, then, cannot force people to change their ways. All they are expected to do is communicate the message with which God has entrusted them:

Yet what should apostles do but give plain warning? (Quran, 16: 35)

But the last of the Prophets had an additional task. It was imperative that his Scripture should be preserved. This could only be ensured by his bringing about a revolution on earth, a revolution that would establish his followers over a substantial portion of the globe.

Without preservation of the Book of God there could be no end to the line of the prophets. Other prophets had been entrusted only with the mission of preaching the word of God, whereas the Prophet Mohammad, besides preaching it, had to ensure its preservation. For this purpose he had to bring about a revolution on earth.

Man has complete control over what he does, but not over the outcome of his actions. This is the grave situation that man is faced with on earth. Man then is in need of special guidance, and God has made provision for him to have it. He has done the maximum to ensure that man should not go astray in his journey through life, or come before God pleading that he had not been shown the way.

Firstly, God has created man in the most noble image. He has given man a conscience, enabling him to differentiate between right and wrong. Then He has placed man in a world based on justice. His silent message of truth emanates from every object of creation. And He has gone one stage further: He has sent prophets throughout the ages to put the truth to the peoples of many different lands; and this in their own languages so that they might not fail to comprehend.

The lives of the Prophets were perfect examples for mankind. But from Noah to Jesus, the treatment meted out to the Prophets made it difficult for their example to be preserved in its pure form; the true facts of their lives were distorted. The prophet of history was a far cry from the prophet of real life.

When Abraham and Ishmael were building the House in Mecca, they prayed for a prophet among their descendants. 2500 years later the Prophet Mohammad arose from the people of Mecca bringing with him special divine succor. The prayer of Abraham was fulfilled, and with it the purpose of the prophets' coming to the world was achieved.

Not only in his personal life did the Prophet Mohammad leave a perfect example for mankind; he was made to experience all kinds of social conditions as well. He thus provides a complete model for man,

both on an individual level and as a member of society at large. In every matter his actions were in accordance with the Will of God. He showed man the life that God would like him to live on earth.

Not only did he establish the perfect pattern of how to worship God, he also showed how God helps those who truly devote their lives to His service. We can see from his life how, if one fears God, one need fear nothing else; if one remains patient in times of provocation He will lead one to success; if one sacrifices this world for the next, one will be given the best in both the worlds; if one rises above negative impulses, one can even win over enemies.

History did not accurately record the lives of the prophets before Mohammad. From a strictly academic and historical point of view, then, their prophethood has not been established. The Prophet Jesus was the last of the ancient line of prophets. Yet so tenuous is his historical position that Bertrand Russell has had occasion to remark: "historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all." This is not the case with the Prophet Mohammad, the last of the prophets. His life is so well-documented and clearly laid down in history that anyone who studies his life is forced to agree with Professor Hitti, "Mohammad was born in the full light of history."

One other thing contributes to the permanence of the prophethood of Mohammad: the Quran, a permanent and lasting miracle, which was revealed to him. If this miracle had been like those bestowed upon the other prophets, its effect would not have lasted beyond his own lifetime, and his prophethood would not have endured throughout the coming generations as it did. A miracle is a wondrous event which man is unable to emulate. So it is with the Quran. It is beyond man to emulate it. There is no doubt that it is a miracle from God.

The dominance granted to the Prophet on earth is such as can be availed of at any time by his followers in just the same way that a farmer, after cultivating his land, using divinely inspired methods, can reap a fine crop. God has provided all of the conditions necessary and conducive to the dominance of the divine religion. By understanding and utilizing them, adherents of this religion can bring Islamic thought into pre-eminence.

Between the time of the Prophet Abraham and the coming of the Prophet Mohammad two thousand five hundred years elapsed. Throughout this period the stage was being set for the coming of the Prophet. The Prophet, acting at God's behest, played the role for which he was cast. That was why his mission was supremely successful.

During the fourteen hundred years that have passed since the times of the Prophet Mohammad, the historical changes that have occurred, the massive advances in human knowledge that have taken place, have all combined in support of Islam. The religion that the Prophet taught can still take the pride of place over other religions. But for this to be achieved the divinely-inspired method has to be adopted. This rule which applied to the Prophet equally applies to his followers.

24 May 1984

Building for the hereafter rather than the world

A Muslim of Medina was building home for himself. He was plastering the walls, when the Prophet passed by and asked what he was doing. "Plastering the wall with mud," he replied. The Hour (Day of Judgment) is closer to you than this," the Prophet said to him.